

Lesson 4: Dissecting Questionable Reasoning

Overview: (50 minute lesson)

In this activity, students will analyze the arguments found in print and visual advertisements to identify, define, and critique logical fallacies. Rather than focusing on the Latin terms for these fallacies, students will create their own names and definitions for them and then apply their understanding by analyzing commercial advertisements and providing commentary during an Ethics Bowl round.

Student Learning Goals:

We will...

- Analyze arguments in popular advertisements and commercials
- Identify and dissect “Questionable Reasoning” (Logical Fallacies) within arguments
- Develop constructive and insightful commentary

How will this help in Ethics Bowl?

This will help your team...

- Thoroughly discuss moral positions
- Thoughtfully consider opposing perspectives
- Create constructive and insightful commentary
- Collaborate in respectful discussions

Materials

- [Questionable Reasoning in Print Advertising - Handout](#)
- [Questionable Reasoning in Ethics Bowl - Handout](#)
- [Answer Key for Questionable Reasoning in Ethics Bowl](#)
- [Lesson 4 Slides with Commercial Advertisements](#)
- [Ethics Bowl Match Scoring Criteria](#)

Preparation before lesson:

- Print both handouts listed above

Lesson Facilitation:

1. Warm-up:
 - a. Pass out the “[Questionable Reasoning in Print Advertising](#)” Handout
 - i. Review the print advertisement as a whole group (5 minutes)
 - ii. Focus on the questions printed at the bottom of the advertisement.
2. Open “[Lesson 4 Slides](#)” and select some commercials to watch and analyze as a group. There are 6 advertisements, and each one provides a different example of *questionable reasoning* (logical fallacies) which are listed below. Choose how many you show based on time constraints and student interest (10-15 minutes)
 - i. [Taco Bell Ad - The Questionable Reasoning of “Everyone Likes This”](#)
 - ii. [DirecTV Ad - The Questionable Reasoning of the “Slippery Slope” or “Snowball Effect”](#)
 - iii. [Chevrolet Ad - The Questionable Reasoning of “Don’t think, just feel”](#)
 - iv. [SimpliSafe Ad - The Questionable Reasoning of “Fear Tactics”](#)
 - v. [Ro Ad - The Questionable Reasoning of “Fake Expertise”](#)
 - vi. [Old Spice Ad - The Questionable Reasoning of “Either/Or” thinking \(and Stereotyping\)](#)
3. Pass out [Questionable Reasoning in Ethics Bowl](#) Handout
 - a. Split students into teams. Have them read the case “Forget Me Not” and the mock case presentation from a 2023 Regional Ethics Bowl Competition.

- b. Students should identify, annotate, and explain any questionable reasoning they see in the team's presentation (10-15 minutes)
 - i. NOTE: See the ["Answer Key" in the materials section](#) for support and guidance
 - c. After, teams should prepare constructive commentary and questions to present to the team in order to help deepen their argument. (Think of this like a mock round of commentary for students. You can have them present it verbally, or have them write it).
4. [Debrief as a whole class by reviewing the Ethics Bowl Rubric](#) and scoring the commentary that students were able to provide.